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RR RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHJA #2214 3441007
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 091007Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0899
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2821
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5709
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 3382
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 5209
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

UNCLAS JAKARTA 002214

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR OES/ENRC, OES/OMC, OES/OA, EAP/MTS, EAP/RSP
USAID FOR ANE, EGAT
COMMERCE FOR NOAA
BANGKOK FOR RDM/A, REO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: INDONESIANS CONTINUE TO FIND ANCIENT FISH

REF: A. JAKARTA 2152

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 1880

[1](#)C. JAKARTA 1766

[1](#)1. Continuing discoveries of the ancient coelacanth fish in the waters of Sulawesi highlight Indonesia's biodiversity. On November 25, a fisherman in North Sulawesi Province, Indonesia, accidentally caught a coelacanth fish (*Latimeria menadoensis*) near Talise Island, North Minahasa Regency, and immediately reported his finding to the North Sulawesi Office of Marine Affairs and Fisheries. The specimen is now in cold storage in Tanawangko, near Manado.

[1](#)2. This is the third live specimen of coelacanth caught in the waters of Sulawesi. The first specimen was only the head of the fish accidentally found in a local market in 1997. The first fish caught alive and documented was in 1998. It is now preserved in the Bogor Museum. The second live specimen was caught in May 2007. It is now in Japan and will be on display during the World Ocean Conference (WOC) in May 2009 in Manado (reftels). The coelacanth is the official icon/mascot of the WOC.

[1](#)3. Background: Previously thought to be extinct and known only from fossil records, the coelacanth fish was first found in 1938 off the coast of South Africa. It was called the greatest zoological find of the 20th century, and a "living fossil". In 1998, a fisherman in Manado, North Sulawesi Province, caught a coelacanth belonging to a different species (*Latimeria menadoensis*). The Manadonese coelacanth is genetically more ancient than the African one. Locals call the fish "raja laut" -- literally, "king of the sea".

[1](#)4. In 2005, a team of scientists conducting deep sea exploration using a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) said they found coelacanth fish in eight different locations in the Sulawesi Sea (including North Sulawesi, Gorontalo, and Central Sulawesi Provinces). According to the head of Wildlife Conservation Society's local office and local officials in Manado, the ROV in 2005 recorded as many as seven living coelacanth fish.

HUME